**Informative Research Product Organizer**

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| **Research Topic:**  Dog and Cat Overpopulation |

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| **Focusing Statement:**  The dog and cat overpopulation is due mainly to consumer ignorance, irresponsible breeding, choosing not to adopt and choosing not to neuter. |

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| **Essential Background Information for Introduction:**  The biggest contributor to pet overpopulation is the ignorance of pet owners to spaying and neutering. Spaying and neutering pets helps decrease the overpopulation because it keeps pets that roam from reproducing unsupervised. Choosing to adopt can also help decrease the population because it provides homes to dogs and cats instead of buying a new dog from a breeder when there is already one available. Many people have a throwaway mentality on pets and underestimate the effort it takes to raise an animal. It is important to educate owners as to how to properly take care of their animal so there is less risk of putting the pet up for adoption. |

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| **Potential Hook/Grabber (**Story, anecdote, quote about your issue**):** |

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| **Topic 1:**  Choosing Not To Adopt | |
| **Explanation**  One of the biggest reasons that the pet overpopulation is a growing issue is because many potential pet owners choose not to adopt. Many people think that this is not a voluntary choice, that there are simply not enough available homes. However, there are more than double the amount of available homes than there are pets. | **Evidence/Quotes:**  “It is a common myth that pet overpopulation means there are “not enough” homes for all the shelter animals. In reality, there are more than enough homes, but not enough people are choosing to adopt from a shelter.” – (American Humane Association, *Pet Overpopulation)*  “20 percent choose to adopt their new pet. The rest choose to buy their pets from pet stores or breeders, or they choose a variety of other cheap or free sources” – (American Humane Assn., *Pet Overpopulation*) |
| **Explanation**  Many people want a certain breed and are unable to get it through adoption, and therefore resort to breeders, pet stores, internet ads, and international importation. | **Evidence/Quotes:**  “You’re not going to make people take animals they don’t want, and if they can’t [adopt it], they’re going to go somewhere else to get it.” – (Whitcomb, *Understanding Pet Overpopulation*. Quoted: Lila Miller)  “And different regions have different wants and needs in terms of pets. Small breed dogs like Chihuahuas can easily be found in California, but not so much in New York, where small dogs are in high demand.” – (Whitcomb, *Understanding Pet Overpopulation)* |
| **Explanation**  Many dogs and cats that don’t get adopted think they are put down because the shelter cannot support them anymore. | **Evidence /Quotes:**  4 out of 5 cats and dogs that go into shelters are killed because they are unadoptable – (Patterson, *Animal Rights*) |

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| **Topic 2:**  Shelters and Adoption Agencies | |
| **Explanation**  There are public and there are private adoption agencies. The difference is primarily within available resources, funding, and carrying capacity. | **Evidence/Quotes:**  “Thresholds are set to determine how many animals can be handled without the costs of care exceeding either income or offsetting other service levels… decide the fate of thousands of unwanted animals in the United States every day.” – (Vaughn, *Shelter Charade*)  Public agencies depend completely on government funding, private depends on personal revenue. – (Vaughn, *Shelter Charade*) |
| **Explanation**  The threshold and funding is often limited in Public Agencies because they are primarily powered by volunteers. Their funding is provided by the government at a limited amount. | **Evidence/Quotes:**  “Public agencies have a low capacity for handling unwanted animals or strays.” – (Vaughn, *Shelter Charade*)  “Public agencies…refuse to handle unwanted animals for adoption and…limit their services to the handling of strays.” – (Vaughn, *Shelter Charade*)  “Funding…is limited for two reasons: 1. Animal control is considered a low priority because it is a low visibility service….2. Animal control projects produce little revenue… in relation to cost.” – (Vaughn, *Shelter Charade*).   “The 3,000 to 3,500 animal shelters nationwide are filled to capacity… About half of all animals brought in to a shelter are euthanized.” (Spears, *Pet Overpopulation: The Problem Multiplies*) |
| **Explanation**  Private agencies tend to carry most of the burden because people think they are better, therefore more animals are sent there. | **Evidence /Quotes:**  “[People] prefer to surrender an animal to a private agency where the threshold is higher and the animal is kept for a longer period of time before being destroyed. The costs of this service are high, with little accompanying revenue.” – (Vaughn, *Shelter Charade*)  Public agencies limiting their services to strays “[places] the burden on private agencies, which in turn may lower the threshold from an average of three days to only one. The result would be an increase in the number of animals destroyed.” – (Vaughn, *Shelter Charade*).  “Private agencies… must depend on volume. A drop in the organization’s membership, for example, will bring about a corresponding drop in service levels at some point.” – (Vaughn, *Shelter Charade*). |
| **Explanation:**  An agency’s financial status determines the number, kind, and quality of services they can offer to adoptable animals. If the agency is disadvantaged, then they will provide less number of services, probably at a lower quality. A facility with more money can provide more, higher quality services. | **Evidence/Quotes:**  Agencies that specialize in one service force pet owners to go elsewhere for other services they need  When a lot of agencies provide the same service, competition is increased and pressure rises for lower costs  When only a few agencies are competing, service becomes minimal – (Vaughn, *Shelter Charade*).  “What has led many to believe the problem lies more with distribution than overpopulation is a lack of adoptable animals at some shelters and an abundance at others. But shelters with hospitals and behaviorists have more success at making unwanted pets with minor health or behavior issues adoptable, while shelters with less resources might turn more often to euthanization.” (Whitcomb, *Understanding Pet Overpopulation*) |

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| **Topic 3:**  “Throwaway” and “Disposable” Pets | |
| **Explanation**  Many people underestimate the effort it takes to raise a dog/cat. Puppies and kittens purchased impulsively tend to end up in shelters. | **Evidence/Quotes:**  “People…underestimate the time required to properly train and care for a pet or the expense of feeding that five-pound St. Bernard puppy when he grows into a 150-pound adult.” – (Cooper, *America’s Pampered Pets*).  “Unrealistic expectations and poor understanding of normal behavior contribute to pet relinquishment, and far too many people treat pets simply as a convenience.” – (Whitcomb, *Understanding Pet Overpopulation*, Quoted: Dr. Jeanette O’Quin). |
| **Explanation**  People have a “throwaway” mentality about pets. | **Evidence/Quotes:**  “"I see it as a commitment issue… There just aren't enough homes willing to commit to the lifetime of an animal." Zawistowski sees the pet overpopulation problem as part of the "throwaway" mentality that pervades our society.” (Spears, *Pet Overpopulation: The Problem Multiplies*, Quoted: Stephen Zawistowski) |

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| **Topic 4:**  Euthanasia  “Many of these animals get more love in these last few seconds than they had in their whole lives.” (Patterson, *Animal rights*, Quoted: ASPCA Director). | |
| **Explanation**  Limited resources can contribute to euthanasia rates. If a dog/cat is costing too much to take care of then the shelter resorts to euthanasia. | **Evidence/Quotes:**  **“…**shelters with hospitals and behaviorists have more success at making unwanted pets with minor health or behavior issues adoptable, while shelters with less resources might turn more often to euthanization.” – (Whitcomb, *Understanding Pet Overpopulation)*  **“**Most animal control programs were underfunded from their inception. They never were given a chance to develop humane programs” – (Boks, *Saving Man’s Best Friend*).  “…most animal control programs were dedicated to providing humane solutions but, because of inadequate funding and the threat of rabies, most felt compelled to become more adept at developing tactical catch and kill methodologies for dealing with the immediate problems associated with dog and cat overpopulation” – (Boks, *Saving Man’s Best Friend*).  “During the off season for adoptions, June, through September, crowded conditions may force some private shelters to euthanize animals as soon as the owner leaves the premises, despite promises to the contrary.” – (Vaughn, *Shelter Charade*). |
| **Explanation**  Pets are put down for a variety of reasons: injury, illness, behavioral issues, as well as the availability of the resources at a shelter. | **Evidence/Quotes:**  “It is true that a good percentage of them must be put down…Either they are so sick or injured, often by a car or truck, or they have such gross social ineptitude that they are dangerous.” – (Cooper, *America’s Pampered Pets*, Quoted: ASPCA President Caras).  “When genetic diseases or behavior problems resulting from poor socialization in early life crop up as the animal grows, it often ends up in the local shelter and, most likely, another statistic in the long list of euthanized pets.” – (Cooper, *America’s Pampered Pets*) |
| **Explanation**  There has been a decrease in euthanizations because of education, spaying and neutering. | **Evidence /Quotes:**  **“…**the number of animals that are euthanized in the nation's shelters has fallen by half over the past two decades, and even more dramatically in the past five years.” - (Cooper, *America’s Pampered Pets*).  “…this is due to educational efforts encouraging responsible pet ownership, including spaying and neutering pets…Also shelters are carrying out much more aggressive adoption policies. Shelters that once had no money and just waited for people to come to them to adopt a pet are now aggressively raising money and selling their product” – (Cooper, *America’s Pampered Pets*, Quoted: Wayne Cavanaugh).  “New York City… [developed] a very successful pet adoption program that resulted in nearly a 115% increase in dog and cat adoptions and almost a 25% drop in pet euthanasia.” – (Boks, *Saving Man’s Best Friend*). |
| **Explanation**  No-Kill Shelters. There are advantages as well as disadvantages to this approach. Although it may save lives, it is extremely costly. | **Evidence/Quotes:**  “No-kill is defined as not euthanizing healthy, adoptable pets just because they are homeless.” – (Boks, *Saving Man’s Best Friend*).  “What would happen if there was enough funding to implement this vision? Clearly, the solution is not to be found in adoption programs alone. We never will adopt our way out of this crisis.” – (Boks, *Saving Man’s Best Friend*). |

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| **Topic 5:**  Spay and Neuter  40,000 puppies a year come from puppy mills – (Patterson, *Animals As Companions*) | |
| **Explanation**  Spaying/ Neutering decreases population. | **Evidence/Quotes:**  “Cities and counties all over the country are aggressively addressing the animal overpopulation crisis, requiring everyone who chooses not to spay or neuter to pay a hefty breeder's fee. Areas with mandatory spay-and-neuter laws have reported a significant reduction in the number of animals who are taken to their facilities and subsequently euthanized.” – (PETA, *Spay and Neuter*).  “Male animals contribute to the companion animal overpopulation crisis even more than females do. Just one unsterilized male animal can impregnate dozens of females, creating dozens upon dozens of unwanted offspring.” – (PETA, *Spay and Neuter*).  “Cats and dogs reproduce much more rapidly than humans do, thanks to early puberty, short pregnancies and large litters. Dogs reproduce about 15 times faster than humans, cats about 45 times faster.” - (Patterson, *Animal Rights*). |
| **Explanation**  Spaying/Neutering has many health benefits to the pet: it prevents cancer, other diseases spread through reproducing, as well as increases positive behavior. | **Evidence/Quotes:**  “Spaying eliminates the stress and discomfort that females endure during heat periods, eliminates the risk of uterine cancer, and greatly reduces the risk of mammary cancer.” – (PETA, *Spay and Neuter*).  “Neutering makes males far less likely to roam or fight, prevents testicular cancer, and reduces the risk of prostate cancer. Altered animals are less likely to contract deadly, contagious diseases, such as feline AIDS and feline leukemia, that are spread through bodily fluids.” – (PETA, *Spay and Neuter*). |
| **Explanation**  Spaying/Neutering is the most cost efficient way to overcome overpopulation. Many states have made it mandatory to spay/neuter a pet. | **Evidence /Quotes:**  “Communities spend millions of taxpayer dollars each year coping with problems that a failure to spay and neuter causes. The one-time cost of spaying or neutering is far lower than the expense involved in rounding up strays, feeding and housing abandoned animals, and euthanizing those for whom homes can't be found.” – (PETA, *Spay and Neuter*).  “Cities and counties all over the country are aggressively addressing the animal overpopulation crisis, requiring everyone who chooses not to spay or neuter to pay a hefty breeder's fee.” – (PETA, *Spay and Neuter*).  “As an additional incentive, many jurisdictions charge more when they issue dog licenses for unneutered animals. In Washington, D.C., for example, dog owners who spay or neuter their pets pay just $10 a year to license them, compared with $35 for unneutered animals.” – (Cooper, *America’s Pampered Pets*) |

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| **Topic 6:**  Puppy Mills and Breeders  “Many [Puppy mills] are located in Kansas, Arkansas, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania…” – (Patterson, *Puppy Mills and Pet Stores*) | |
| **Explanation**  Most puppy mills are in extremely poor condition. There are many animals in small cramped sspaces. Most puppy mills go through their business without being regulated or inspected. | **Evidence/Quotes:**  “These kennels breed as many puppies as they can as rapidly as possible. Female dogs live in crowded outdoor cages where they are bred continuously, with no rest between litters.” – (Patterson, *Animal Rights*)  “Mothers and their puppies suffer from malnutrition, disease, exposure, and lack of veterinary care.” – (Patterson, *Animal Rights*) |
| **Explanation**  Most puppy mills are located in the Midwest | **Evidence/Quotes:**  Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas, Iowa and Arkansas – (Evans, *Animal Rights*) |